

**SCPD EMPLOYMENT FIRST  
APRIL 12, 2016  
SMYRNA REST AREA CONFERENCE ROOM, SMYRNA**

**Present:** Dan Madrid, Vice-Chair DVI; Janet Berry/Kristy Harmon, BlindSight Delaware; Deb Bradl, DVI; Marissa Catalon, DDDS; Ellen Coulston, Parent; Nick Fina, SCPD; Andrea Guest, DVR; Representative Debra Heffernan, Delaware State House of Representatives; Emmanuel Jenkins, DDC; Melissa Martin, Autism DE; Dale Matusevich, DOE; Lloyd Schmitz, Council on Blind/SCPD; Cindy Sterling, ServiceSource/Ability Network of Delaware (AND); Laura Strmel, SJCS-DE; Sandra Ryes, OMB/HRM; Kyle Hodges, Staff; and Amber Rivard, Support Staff.

**CALL TO ORDER/Introductions/Approval of February Minutes**

Dan called the meeting to order at 9:40 am. Everyone introduced themselves. Paul Beane provided some clarification about the State Use Law amendments and will provide the wording electronically. The February 9, 2015 minutes approved as amended.

**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**

None

**BUSINESS**

**Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Project Update & Progress/Strategies & Goals to Better Implement the Employment First Initiative**

Dan Madrid stated that we are in the third year of the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Project. He serves as the point person for the Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS). They are currently focused on three strategies:

- Phase out of the sheltered workshops under DHSS under Delaware Industries for the Blind (DIB) and Delaware Psychiatric Center (DPC).

The DPC phase out has been going well. DVR also has been involved with this. No new people are being entered into the DPC sheltered workshop as of January 1 and they are phasing down some of the work. Half of the people have been placed in competitive work and the remaining six are going through the process of customized employment and rehab support. The data has been tracked and submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Disability Employment Policy who has provided support to us over the last three years. Lloyd asked if the custodial work is under State Use Law. Dan explained that the custodial work now is under the Ability Network of Delaware (AND) - no one has been displaced. The goal is to make DIB a private enterprise based in the community. There have been discussions with BlindSight Delaware and they are looking at a regional partner to set up a new corporate entity in Delaware that will continue with the employment and work opportunities for people with visual impairments. Dan commented that they are optimistic in how this will play out in the next two-three months. He thinks DIB will be able to move into the community and employees will

receive competitive wages and expand the capacity of the current business, including shifting from products to service delivery.

- They are assisting DSAMH with their 1115 Medicaid Waiver called PROMISE to ensure that it is well structured for supportive employment opportunities. Virginia Selleck has been working with us over the past two years. Dan recently met with Mike Barbieri and his leadership team. He stated that Virginia is currently working on training DSAMH staff on the modern models of employment supports for people with severe and persistent mental illness. They are also reviewing contracts and provider structure. They hope to mirror what DDDS, DVI and DSAAPD have accomplished under Pathways, including having robust employment services in place. He added that Andrea has committed additional DVR resources to DSAMH's ACT Teams.
- They are also looking at social determinants of health across government agencies, including the interconnection of disability, poverty and employment outcomes. He added that the number one driver of poor outcomes is poverty and the only way to address it is through employment and financial stability. There have been discussions with Nemours, United Way and many coalitions throughout the state that are focused on poverty. They are planning to reconvene and discuss improving coordination efforts that cut across disability, employment, education and health care. The goal is to develop a white paper which could be used to get grants and resources to restructure. Dan will share the scheduled meeting date with everyone.

Dan stated that we have also worked on marketing, including a video focused on supporting employment for people with disabilities, restructuring policy within Divisions, with a lot of effort from folks here. A question was asked if any people are still in the sheltered workshops at DPC and the plan to phase out. Dan commented that custodial work has been completely phased out and woodshop work has been almost completely phased out. The Work Activity Center still has people in it until they are transitioned with support from DVR. Andrea commented that everyone is actively working with a VR counselor. Dan added that the goal is to have the sheltered workshop completely phased out by November, 2016. Nick asked if there is good qualitative research to find out the impact on people. Dan stated it is always brought up during the monthly meetings that the people need to be included in the process. Comment was made that people are being taken out of their comfort zone, but it was good that they were included in the discussions. Comment was made that it was good to have trusted advocates on board like Lloyd.

There was some discussion about the State supports that will be needed when DIB transitions out into the community in order for it to be successful. Dan stated that there is a business plan in place and they will be meeting with the third partner soon. Once their commitment is obtained, there will be an official proposal developed with the next strategic steps outlined. A question was asked about corporate sponsorship or seeking assistance from the community. Dan commented that grant applications have been submitted and there have been preliminary discussions. Dan added that they are looking at large regional partners. Cindy asked if there is a plan to support others in doing this. He added that conversations will have to come back to this group as to what would it take, if we continue to advance this mission, and what the expectations are in the provider community. This would have to be put on the table and negotiated.

Comment was made about getting buy-in from education and transition services. Dan commented that we could discuss Pathways and then talk about strategies as we move forward.

### Pathways to Employment Update

Marissa Catalon spoke about the launching of Pathways in the summer of 2012. Agencies involved in Pathways include DDDS, DVR, DVI, DOE and local education agencies. She distributed copies of an overview, an informational brochure, and April statistics (handouts). She said that they applied for Pathways to Employment, and were accepted in December 2014; implementation took place in 2015 and initial enrollment and services started in September, 2015. Marissa explained that this program is a set of services for youth aged 14-25 who meet one of the disability categories: individuals with intellectual or autism spectrum disorders, visual impairment or physical disability. This is the first of its kind in the country. Services include:

- Employment Navigator
- Career Exploration and Assessment
- Supported Employment - Individual
- Supported Employment - Small Group
- Benefits Counseling
- Financial Coaching
- Non-Medical Transportation
- Personal Care (including a self-directed component)
- Orientation, Mobility, Assistive Technology

Marissa spoke about the early challenges with implementation, including some difficulty with bringing Pathways to the forefront, provider enrollment, and limited number of employment navigators for a large pool of individuals who would be potentially eligible. There were also new regulations and legislation that came into place, which had an impact on Pathways. Marissa added that overall it has been fairly successful. She said they are looking at why people are being denied services, resolving issues, and looking at other options. Nick asked how people are finding out about the program. Marissa explained that initially they had a long list of potential people from various agencies. DDDS has worked to make connections with DOE. Most referrals come from the local education agencies. Nick asked if information was on a webpage. Marissa explained that DSAAPD created the initial webpage and DDDS added a link onto their webpage. Lloyd asked about disseminating information to the Parent Information Center (PIC). Marissa stated that they have been working with them for several years to ensure that information is given to families. There was discussion about lack of numbers in Kent and Sussex Counties. Marissa explained that there was no one individual identified as a coordinator so each agency is responsible for pulling their services together. They are planning to cross train DDDS employees. Marissa added that there are only 7 navigators across agencies throughout the state. Andrea asked if they have been able to gauge what services they are providing the most. Marissa stated that Supportive Employment is the largest and explained how the process works, giving several examples. Lloyd asked how we ensure that all eligible people from an agency are being referred to Pathways. Dan explained that they run data on all Medicaid-eligible people in the eligible age group and run a new report quarterly; this information is given to the Employment Navigators to contact people about Pathways. Andrea added that DVR has been

connected to DDDS for a long time and Pathways is another way. Their linkage is when the person completes DVR services, and then they are referred back to DDDS for Pathways. DDDS also provides follow-up services for those who are not eligible for Pathways. This is an additional opportunity to enhance services for this particular age group. Dale stated that DOE tries to have all the referrals come from the schools. If students are not eligible for Pathways, they can be referred to other programs from agencies. Dale spoke about the confusion created with change and people thinking one program is replaced by Pathways, which it is not. He said that they are trying to provide clarification, but he thought it was going fairly well. He also said that we will not achieve 100% participation because some families refuse services; they plan to track this information on the IEP starting in the fall. Marissa added that marketing and communication are ongoing activities. Andrea commented that there seems to be some confusion around eligibility and there should be targeting to a specific group that is eligible. Ellen spoke about the difficulty in finding out about programs in her local school district. She added that there are a lot of opportunities with career readiness. Dan commented that the marketing strategy may need to be revamped to include different programs and that Pathways is one funding stream when approaching families; there is a need to co-brand. Parents look at this from a services perspective. Also comment was made that the word needs to get out at an earlier age. Kyle thanked Marissa for the update today. He added that we should have continued discussion on this.

#### Subminimum Wage Legislation

Kyle spoke about the last meeting where we briefly addressed legislation from Maryland on the phase-out of subminimum wages (handout). He stated that further discussion on this issue and any path forward in Delaware is warranted. There are two phases in transitioning the sheltered workshops--one is subminimum wage and the other is community integration. It was certainly agreed that all the various groups which could be affected by any potential legislation should be included in all discussions. There are financial and resource impacts.

The Maryland legislation has many exceptions, but it appears that if agencies are receiving State funding or support, then people cannot be paid subminimum wage. Dan noted that we need a lot of data and assessment that shows impact and how government needs to respond in order to make this successful. The success of ServiceSource was noted and any path forward should look at their program. The need for good benefit counseling was noted.

It was recognized that this will be a long-term initiative which will not be addressed legislatively until at least the next legislative session which begins in 2017. However, collaboration and discussion with affected groups should start after this session. Alternative programs and options will need to be discussed.

Andrea stated that the law (WOIA) requires more vigorous assessments of people in sheltered employment. The Commission could help facilitate any path forward such as collaboration and data collection. We need to determine how to best engage affected organizations and people and have an open honest discussion on the issue.

Luara noted there is a small Conversion Conference on June 28-29, 2016 in Washington, DC offered by St. John's Community Services. Laura will send out conference information for distribution. Andrea offered to pay for some folks to attend.

#### State Use Program Amendments Update

Dan stated that the State Use Commission provided the Joint Sunset Committee with new legislation that was finalized at the previous meeting held in March. There was an expectation that the legislation will be introduced in the next couple of weeks. Kyle added that SCPD provided comments on the legislation. The intent of the bill is to modernize the State Use Program, which provides contracting opportunities and support for persons with disabilities. Revisions include: allowing the private sector to compete and eliminated subminimum wage as a requirement to participate; modified the integration requirements in the bill for programs or companies that provide services would require 75% of employees being those with disabilities; for business that focus on making products and for contracts it would require 50% of the employees being those with disabilities. Andrea asked about the issue of criminal background checks, which eliminates a lot of potential clients from participating. Dan stated that it has been discussed and they are trying to obtain guidance and response on this issue.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

None

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Singles  
Administrative Specialist

Employment First/minutes 4-12-16